APPENDIX

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REPORT ON THE SEVENTH ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH LIBRARIES
Toronto, Canada, June 18-21, 1972

The Association of Jewish Libraries held its seventh annual convention at the Hyatt House in Toronto, June 18-21.

Dov Noy, Professor of Jewish Folklore Studies at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, delivered an address at the opening session on Sunday evening, June 18. Dr. Noy is at present supervising a project to record Yiddish folk songs of the older members of the Toronto Jewish community. While Jewish tradition stresses the study of the formal classics, like the *Bible*, the *Talmud*, and medieval commentaries, the informal creations of the people in folk tales and folk songs are just as much part of their heritage, Dr. Noy asserted. As a matter of fact, the written record was always preceded by a long chain of oral transmission before it was committed to writing. He urged the encouragement of local archives within Jewish communities that would preserve records of the experiences of individuals and organizations. In the discussion that followed the lecture, reference was made to *By Myself, I'm a Book* [see LC *Information Bulletin*, June 30, p. 292], which includes recollections of 220 Jewish immigrants to Pittsburgh. The book was edited and published by the American Jewish Historical society.

On Monday the delegates visited several local libraries, including that of the Holy Blossom Temple, a Reform Jewish congregation. Unlike most institutions of this kind, it does not maintain a central library for all its users, but rather has established separate collections for adult lay readers religious school teachers, and for each classroom in order to serve the varied needs of its diverse clientele.

The tour of the libraries was followed by a luncheon given for the delegates by the Temple. The guest speaker at that occasion was its rabbi, W. Gunther Plaut, who read from a forthcoming commentary on the Book of Genesis which he is about to publish. This commentary is intended for today's Jewish layman and tries to avoid some of the pitfalls of those in use now, such as excessive apologetics and too rigid a traditionalist attitude.

After the luncheon, a panel on readers services was held. Miriam Leikind, Librarian of the Temple in Cleveland, demonstrated how imaginative and resourceful planning could stimulate use of the library by all age groups. Leonard Gold, Chief of the Jewish Division of the New York Public Library, recounted the unique place this collection occupies in the life of the American Jewish community, serving both lay readers and scholars. Of particular importance has been its role in the compilation of two major Jewish scholarly undertakings in America, the *Jewish Encyclopedia* (1901-1906) and the *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* (1939-1943). Sidney August, Librarian of the Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel, Elkins Park, Pa., and Director of the Philadelphia Community College Library, discussed the use and limitation of audiovisual materials in the setting of a synagogue library.

Later in the afternoon, the delegates visited the Jewish Public Library of Toronto. This library is unique in that it is not connected with any synagogue or educational institution, but is maintained by the whole Jewish community.

On Tuesday the delegates assembled at Beth Tzedec Congregation, the largest synagogue in Canada, and toured its museum and library. The museum is designated the Canadian branch of the Jewish Museum of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York. The major part of its collection had originally been brought together by Cecil Roth, the late Jewish historian in England. In addition to many Jewish ceremonial objects, it includes many illuminated marriage contracts from Italy and the Near East, some dating back several hundred years.

The rest of the morning was devoted to a session on "Romanization of Hebrew" led by Herbert C. Zafren, Director of Libraries, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, and Chairman of the Sub-committee on the Romanization of Hebrew and Yiddish of Committee Z39 of the American Standards Institute. Instead of a single standard for romanization, the committee is proposing several—one for popular use without diacritical marks—and the others for scientific uses: one avoiding digraphs, and a special one for computer-compatible transliteration. The last is intended to speed the inclusion of Hebrew cards in the MARC program, but would involve the elimination of Hebrew characters from the catalog cards. This latter

feature encountered a good deal of opposition in the spirited discussion that followed the formal presentation.

In the afternoon, Nathan Kaganoff, Librarian and Editor of the American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, Mass., outgoing President of the Association and a former LC staff member, spoke on "Archives—Collection, Preservation, and Cataloging." He stressed the importance of the preservation of local community records and showed that it was comparatively easy for untrained people to assemble and arrange such collections to hand down to future generations.

This was followed by an informal information exchange presided over by Lawrence Wember, Librarian, City of Oak Park, Mich. In this discussion, delegates presented the day-to-day problems of meeting the needs of the users of synagogue libraries in particular. While support for these libraries is very often insufficient, the demands of the public on these institutions is often equally unrealistic.

That evening the convention banquet at Beth Tzedec Congregation was addressed by its rabbi, Stuart Rosenberg. He chose as his topic, "Canada: The Jewish Community of the Future." Unlike America, Canada never was considered a melting pot in which the various nationalities and ethnic communities were to submerge their differences. The survival of the French community over the centuries as a distinctive group that even now threatens to secede is a striking case in point. The Canadian Jewish community, very often originating in more recent immigration from overseas than its American counterpart, has therefore also a stronger sense of its ethnicity than American Jewry. Dr. Rosenberg believed this to be an advantage as he considered this sense of nationality an integral part of Jewishness.

On Wednesday morning the last session of the convention was devoted to a discussion of the new 16-volume *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, under the chairmanship of Theodore Wiener, Supervisor of the Hebraic Language Unit in the Descriptive Cataloging Division at the Library of Congress. This third major Jewish encyclopedia in English in 70 years was compiled in collaboration with over 2,000 contributors from all over the world. Unevenness in quality was inevitable as were occasional errors of fact and lack of balance in the treatment of some subjects. But it was agreed that it contained authoritative information on a host of items not easily obtained elsewhere. Another important feature distinguishing this work from its predecessors is the extensive index in the introductory volume.

Before adjourning, the convention adopted a resolution protesting the continued imprisonment of Raiza Palatnik and Emilia Trachtenberg, two Jewish librarians in the Soviet Union who wish to emigrate to Israel.

Officers elected for the coming year include Mrs. Anne Kirshenbaum, Librarian of Temple Beth El, Rochester, N.Y., President; Mr. Gold and Mrs. Rose Miskin, Librarian of Beth Tzedec Sisterhood Library, Toronto, Vice Presidents; Shalva Telushkin, Brandeis University, Corresponding Secretary; Jack Cravets, Librarian, Temple Brith Kodesh, Rochester, N.J., Recording Secretary; and Mrs. Mildred Kurland, Philadelphia, Treasurer. [*Theodore Wiener*]